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***“Defend the Water” Calls Out the Petrochemical Industry for
Public Health, Environment and Climate Change Risks
More than 50 Native American Leaders to Join Action
Multi-State Coalition People Over Petro Launches to Fight Petro Industry Expansion***

Community leaders and advocates from several states will meet in Pittsburgh to stand in solidarity with Native American leaders from across the country during a day of action in opposition to the expansion of the gas and petrochemical industry in the Ohio River Valley.

The action will be held during the Shale Insight Conference at the David L. Lawrence Convention Center in Pittsburgh where President Donald Trump will deliver the keynote address.

Wednesday, Oct. 23, 2019
Defend the Water Native Water Ceremony*
Noon – Point State Park Fountain
1 p.m. – March Down Liberty Avenue
2 p.m. – Rally at David L. Lawrence Convention Center**

As industry executives and President Trump meet inside to discuss the build out of pipelines and petrochemical facilities throughout the Appalachian Basin, indigenous and environmental advocates – including faith, youth and health leaders – will demand an end to the poisoning of our water, air and land. Groups also seek investment in clean industries and jobs that won't harm the health of workers and people for decades to come.

Native American leaders have long been leading the fight to preserve the sanctity of our natural resources, but political leaders have failed to hear their words, unwilling to stop or prevent petrochemical plastics manufacturing.

The Point State Park water ceremony will be led by Cheryl Angel, a Sicangu Lakota grandmother. Guy W. Jones, a Hunkpapa Lakota elder and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, will lead the rally at 2 p.m. They will be joined by Native American leaders and frontline community leaders from southwestern Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia who will voice their opposition to petrochemical development in the Ohio River Valley and across the country.

“The water ceremony recognizes that water is not just a life sustaining element that we draw and bring into our homes but a ritual to honor our ancestors and say thank you,” says Cheryl Angel. “Water is sacred. We become the vessels when we drink the water. If the waters are polluted, so are we; We are drinking a poison that leads to our demise.”

“As we gather, pray and march, we seek only justice – justice for those who have no voice – the land, the water, all the plants and animals, our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren who are alive today and all those yet to be born,” says Guy Jones.

During the rally, a new multi-state coalition of community organizations and individuals will be announced. [People Over Petro](http://www.peopleoverpetro.org/) is a member-driven coalition that will work together to fight petrochemical development and reverse the expansion of the petrochemical industry in the Appalachian Basin, encouraging instead a clean, renewable and regenerative economic foundation. Read more about the coalition at <http://www.peopleoverpetro.org/>

"People Over Petro formed out of a growing need for everyday citizens of the Ohio River Valley and Appalachian region to feel connected and supported as we create a healthy, sustainable future together while working to tip the scales away from fossil-fueled corporate greed, pillaging and plundering of the region," says Bev Reed of Concerned Ohio River Residents. "We cannot thrive when fossil-fuel industries wield more power than people. We are working to make sure Appalachia doesn't turn into a plastics manufacturing sacrifice zone."

Master of Ceremonies:

Dustin White, project coordinator of Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition (OVEC) and Cheryl Johncox, Beyond Dirty Fuels organizer for Sierra Club Ohio, will facilitate the rally that starts at 2 p.m.

Speakers at the Rally (in speaking order):

Jill St. Ledger-Roti (Welcome) – retired attorney, poet, activist and member of Defend Ohi:yo', Nekanehsakt, the NoNAPL coalition and a founding member of the Race Unity Circle of Olean.

Guy Jones – A Hunkpapa Lakota elder and member of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, Guy is a prominent voice for the Native American Community in Ohio. He is a founder of the Miami Valley Council for Native Americans in Dayton, Ohio, and has served as an advisor to the Cincinnati Museum of Natural History, the Minority Arts Task Force of the Ohio Arts Council, the Greater Dayton Christian Race Relations Task Force, and the Bias Review Council of the Ohio Department of Education.

[Cheryl Angel](#) – A Sicangu (Rosebud) Lakota elder, grandmother, mother of five children, spiritual activist and lifelong devoted water protector who helped to initiate and maintain the Standing Rock camp since April 2016. She was vital in the nonviolent resistance to the Dakota Access and Keystone XL pipelines.

Bev Reed, a Belmont Ohio resident, activist, founding member of [People Over Petro](http://www.peopleoverpetro.org/)

Judith LeBlanc (Caddo) – Director of the Native Organizers Alliance and a board member of The Natural History Museum.

Phyllis Young – A member of [Standing Rock](#) in North and South Dakota, she has been an American Indian rights activist (Lakota/Dakota) for more than 40 years. She is most widely known for her leadership role in the [anti-Dakota Access Pipeline struggle](#) in 2016 and 2017.

Henry Red Cloud (Lakota) – The founder of Lakota Solar Enterprises on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, one of the first 100% Native-owned and operated renewable energy companies in the nation.

Mark K. Tilsen – (Oglala Lakota) is a poet, educator and activist from the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.

Jean Roach – A Lakota Unci (grandmother) who advocates to ensure future generations to have clean water and to be able to enjoy Unci Maka (Mother Earth) and her gifts.

Joye Braun - Wanbli Wiyan Ka'win or Eagle Feather Woman is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe and a frontline community organizer with Indigenous Environmental Network.

Native Youth Leaders:

Morgan Brings Plenty – Owiskawin or White Earring Woman is a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe.

Lydia Green Miller– Native youth leader and member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians

Frontline Community Speakers

Sr. Kari Pohl, Sisters of St. Joseph and Beaver County resident

Yvette Arrellano, a Gulf Coast resident and policy research and grassroots advocate with Texas Environmental Justice Advocacy Services in Houston.

Dancing, chanting and prayers will be interspersed throughout the rally.

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Following the Defend the Water rally, the Women's March on Washington, Pittsburgh, will take the stage for their own rally. While People Over Petro supports this event, it is completely separate from Defend the Water. Defend the Water does not assume any responsibility for statements and messages made by President Trump supporters and protestors and the Women's March on Washington, Pittsburgh and Indivisible organizers and speakers.

**Media are asked to respect the wishes of Native American leaders and not photograph the water ceremony.*

***The rally at 2 p.m. has been moved to 10th and Penn Avenue due to President's Trumps visit to Pittsburgh and the David L. Lawrence Convention Center.*